



[Home](#) › [Articles](#) › Childcare main barrier to female participation

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[Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia, 2016-17 financial year](#)

Caring for children remained the most common perceived barrier to participation in the labour market for women in 2016-17, despite increasing female participation in the labour force, according to new data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

The data showed there was a fall in the number of women reporting they wanted to start work or work more but felt unable to because of perceived barriers – down from 740,000 women in 2014-15 to 665,000 in 2016-17.

“The good news is that we are seeing a continued increase in female participation in the labour force, but the data shows that childcare remains the biggest challenge,” said ABS Chief Economist Bruce Hockman.

“Around 159,000 women, representing around a quarter of women who wanted to do more work or start working, the main perceived barrier was the need to look after children. This was an increase from 19 per cent or 142,000 women in 2014-15,” Mr Hockman said.

Where looking after children was the main perceived barrier, 39 per cent of women reported that they preferred to look after their children. A further 20 per cent cited the cost of the childcare was the barrier, 14 per cent cited that there was no available childcare, 12 per cent cited that their children were too young, while a further 15 per cent cited other reasons.

“These data provide insights into which remaining barriers could be addressed to encourage future participation in the workforce,” Mr Hockman said.

Further information is available in [Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6239.0\)](#) (cat. no 6239.0). This two-

yearly publication provides detailed information on characteristics of people aged 18 years and over who are not participating, or not participating fully, in the labour force and the factors that influence them to join or leave the labour force.